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Reade, Arthur
Russia under Nicholas II

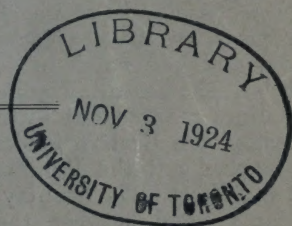
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RUSSIA UNDER NICHOLAS II.

BY

ARTHUR READE.



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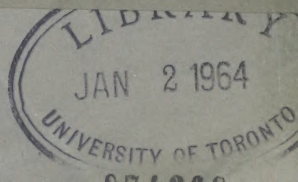
BY

ARTHUR READE.

When Nicholas II. became Tsar in 1894 he inherited an Empire which had practically reached the natural limits of its expansion. The history of Russia up to the present time has been largely the history of that expansion. The impulses behind it are not difficult to fathom. Whether there was or was not a strong colonizing instinct in the early Slavs, it is clear that the circumstances in which they were placed forced them to develop one. The position of Moscow in the centre of the European half of the Eurasian plain, surrounded by enemies on every side and protected by no natural barriers such as form the frontiers of most West European countries, made expansion a matter of life or death. Not until she had reached the frontiers of the Great Plain could Russia settle down in security to put her own house in order. And as the growing strength of the nation made itself felt, to the imperious necessity of self-preservation were added other motives for expansion, more especially the desire of the inhabitants of the Great Plain to find an outlet for the products of their labour through access to the sea. It was largely with this object in view that Peter the Great transferred the seat of Government from Moscow to St. Petersburg, and the movement seawards has continued ever since. Whether consciously or unconsciously the desire to reach warm-water ports has been a factor in Russia's repeated wars with Turkey, and had much to do with the policy in the Far East which brought her into conflict with Japan.

The lines marked out by nature for Russian expansion have emphasised the Eastern tendencies in the Russian character and have marked out the Russian as the natural mediator between West and East. The country itself lay for centuries like a great No Man's Land between the thickly populated East and the growing civilisations of the West, and here, if anywhere, the characteristics of West and East were destined to fuse. At one time there was even a possibility of Islamism becoming the official faith of Russia rather than Christianity, and the Christianity that Russia finally adopted was derived not from Rome but from Byzantium. The Tartar conquest which, in the pre-Moscow period, had overwhelmed the infant kingdom of Kiev, strengthened the Eastern element by infusing an Eastern strain into the Russian blood and by leaving after it certain Eastern habits of life and conceptions of government. And, in spite of the Western bias of Peter the Great and other Tsars, her inevitable expansion over the Great Plain converted Russia more and more into an Asiatic Empire.

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- The necessity of expansion, as the sole condition of self-preservation, is the explanation of Russia's political backwardness. Like Prussia, she was compelled to organise herself on military lines. She had first of all to defend herself from, and subsequently to reduce to submission, the Asiatic hordes which swept like East winds over the Great Plain. Against these she stood firm as the Eastern outpost of Christianity—a position which became more and more important as Islam moved westwards and occupied Constantinople. There were equally formidable enemies to cope with in the West. Inevitably the Russians were led to adopt a military organisation of the State and submit to the rule of a military autocrat. Serfdom itself was introduced largely for military reasons. At the close of the 16th Century, when Russia was engaged in desperate struggles against the Teutonic Knights and Poland, she found the tide of colonisation flowing so swiftly as dangerously to disperse her resources. It was then that the peasant was deprived of his right to migrate on St. George's Day, and became bound to the soil that he might the more easily be made a soldier. Military factors were the determining ones, and it was only when Russia had reached her natural frontiers in the 19th Century, and had no more to fear from foes within those frontiers, that the social problem became acute.

The problem had occupied the minds of individual Russians, however, long before this. The Tsars themselves were among the first to realise the necessity for social change, and they naturally turned for guidance to the West. From the time of Peter the Great the relations of Russia to West European thought have been marked by alternative periods of attraction and repulsion. Peter himself aimed at retaining his position of a semi-oriental despot while forcing upon his subjects the West European standards of economic and mechanical progress—two ideals which cannot, in the long run, be reconciled. Modern Russia, with all its contradictions, is largely his creation. He conceived of the State as a huge mechanism to carry out the will of a commander-in-chief. This will expressed itself through the great bureaucratic machine which still administers Russia. And in order that the machine might be as efficient as possible and draw on the most intelligent of the population, he framed it on democratic lines. Every man, however humble his birth, who attained the rank of officer, became a member of the nobility. The same principle was introduced into the Civil Service also, every official who reached a certain class becoming a noble. High birth counted for little, service for much, in obtaining promotion. The old nobility (the *boyars*) had long ago been reduced to order by Ivan the Terrible, and the effect of Peter's system was still further to weaken their power. The Church, always of immense importance in Russia, he placed under the State by means of the Holy Synod. As for the people, their duty was implicitly to obey whatever orders were issued by their Sovereign. The Western elements in this system were that the bureaucratic machine was largely founded on German models, and that the peasantry were forced as far as possible to

adopt the mechanical side of West European civilisation. Peter desired the body of Western civilisation without its soul.

Peter, with his boundless energy and his westernisation of Russia by means of the knout, seemed to his subjects to be Antichrist, and they revolted in their inmost souls against his germanization of the Slav. But with the advent of Catherine II. a new attraction to West Europe made itself felt. Catherine was a friend of Voltaire and other French thinkers, and genuinely desired the welfare of her subjects, even if her desires were not very effectually realised. Reaction followed, but the Western tendency again became effective in the reign of Alexander I., who commenced life as an enthusiastic adherent of the doctrines of the French Revolution and with a strong leaning in favour of representative institutions. Nevertheless, the Russian in him was stirred to the depths by the French invasion, and in the reign of his successor a period of repulsion towards West Europe set in.

Meanwhile, however, Western ideas of progress had been making vigorous headway among educated people and found increasing expression in literature. Turgéniev directed the attention of Russian society to peasant life and revealed to the satin-clad beauties of Russian society that the moujik could experience the emotions of love and hate as keenly as those who lived in the world of wealth and fashion. Much talent that would otherwise have found its best scope in politics was deflected, for reasons of personal security, into literature and journalism, but the books so produced were tinged with the new spirit. In the security of exile Herzén and others were preaching the gospels of socialism or communism, and their teaching had a considerable effect on Russian thought. During the lifetime of Nicholas I. these tendencies were kept in check, but with the shock of the Crimean War and the accession of Alexander II., they came to the surface and for a while dominated Russian policy. They produced two epoch-making reforms, the abolition of serfdom and the foundation of the Zemstvo.

This is not the place in which to speak of the promise with which the reign of Alexander II. opened, the great achievements of its early years, the disillusion, the gloom and the anarchy in which it closed. West European ideas had been applied too crudely to Russia, too spasmodically perhaps to give them a fair chance, and the country, like the Emperor, was in two minds and required pulling together again at all costs. This task was achieved by Alexander III., who combated the doctrinaire philosophy of the extreme revolutionaries by raising against them the philosophy of Russian nationalism and emphasising the points of difference between Russia and Western Europe.

In all these swingings of the pendulum from East to West and from West to East, we seem to see the soul of Russia trying to discover itself, to disentangle itself from alien influences and to find its own civilisation by comparison and contrast with the civilisations of other lands. Whenever the nation goes too far in either direction, something happens which enables it to right itself. Russia is neither an Eastern theocracy nor yet a

Western democracy; it is her instinct to strike a balance between the two and to evolve a distinctive type of state.

Every age is an age of transition, but the word may be applied with peculiar aptness to the Russia of Nicholas II. The problem confronting the Tsar on his accession was a vast problem of readjustment. It is on a scale too colossal for the solution of any individual. Forces are at work whose effects no human being can calculate.

The ultimate factor in Russia is the Russian peasant. The young Tsar found himself called upon to rule over a population of which at least three-fourths ranked as peasantry and of whom the great majority were illiterate. For about a generation they had enjoyed the fruits of Alexander II.'s great reform, the abolition of serfdom. Nevertheless, they were still cut off almost entirely from the educated half of the Russian world. The intellectuals were West European in sympathy, the moujiks were Russian; the intellectuals were atheists, the moujiks intensely religious—there was little to bridge the gulf between them. They lived as in different hemispheres. There was a far greater feeling of intimacy between the peasants and the Tsar in spite of the fact that the "Little Father" was venerated, in the true spirit of an Eastern theocracy, as not merely a sovereign but also practically as a god. Peasant and Tsar had combined in an earlier century to destroy the power of the *boyars*, and the alliance, though sometimes strained, had never been broken. Tsardom was the form of government the peasantry understood and desired.

The characteristic peasant institution was the *mir* or village commune, the principle underlying which was the common ownership of the land by all members of the commune. The system worked out in practice roughly as follows. At the time of the emancipation of the serfs, the peasants bought through the State a portion of the land to which they had been attached. This was then divided up among the members of the commune in such a way that each male householder received an equal portion. But in order that each householder should share both in the more and the less productive parts of the land, the shares were divided into strips so that each peasant had some of the good and some of the poor land. This attempt at equality by no means implies that the members of the commune remain equally wealthy: the lapse of time inevitably brings inequalities in its train. These may be remedied, should the commune wish it, by a redivision of the land at certain intervals, but the process making for inequality inevitably reasserts itself.

The peasants have little power of independent action. The Government exercises control over them by means of officials known as Wardens of the Peasantry (*Zemskie Nachalniki*), who are usually large landowners with orthodox political opinions, and who possess considerable judicial and administrative powers. The peasants have, however, a communal council or folk-mote, to which all adult males belong and which elects its own *starosta* or elder. It discusses questions of village economy, but if it

ventures to touch on political matters, the police soon interfere. The *starosta* is responsible for collecting the taxes and has the support of another peasant who serves as *desiatnik*, or policeman.

The system of communal landholding is typical of the communal spirit of the Russian peasant. The Russians like doing things together. "The commune," writes Dr. Williams, "is a kind of mutual aid society, and the habit of united action, ingrained as a result of centuries of communal life, is one of the most marked features of the Russian peasant's character. Living together in a village, not scattered about on separate lots of land, possessing strongly developed social instincts, they are communicative, gossipy, given to lending and borrowing, observant of custom, retentive of tradition." They have evolved another typical form of association, known as the *artel*, which Dr. Williams describes as "a kind of mutual liability association." The *artel* is not confined to the countryside but is transplanted by the peasants when they move into the towns. "Workmen frequently form artels as a guarantee against loss. The porters on railway stations are organized in artels, so are the floor-polishers, so are the messengers in red caps who stand at the street corners in the cities, so are the messengers in banks and business houses. The *artel* is liable for all its members, so that if one of them steals or injures property, the *artel* has to make the loss good. The members of the artels pool their money and share gains as well as losses. Peasants from a village community often form themselves into an *artel* when they go to work at a distance . . ."

N The land forms one of the two great interests of the Russian peasant. The other is religion. The Church in Russia makes its presence felt on every side—in the eikons that adorn every room, in the shrines at the street corners and in the railway stations, in the use of the Old Style in the calendar instead of the new, in the constant cessation of work on account of Saints' days, and in a hundred other ways. As Mr. Rothay Reynolds writes: "God and His Mother, Saints and Angels, seem near: men rejoice or stand ashamed beneath their gaze. The people of the land have made it a vast sanctuary, perfumed with prayer and filled with the memories of heroes of the faith. Saints and sinners, believers and infidels, are affected by its atmosphere; and so it has come about that Russia is the land of lofty ideals." Pilgrimages, again, are as common to-day in Russia as they were in West Europe during the Middle Ages, and every year thousands of peasants go beyond the bounds of Russia to Jerusalem, in order to spend Holy Week and Easter amid the scenes of the Passion and the Resurrection.

There are historical reasons for the Russian peasants' enthusiasm for Christianity. Russia was for centuries the most easterly outpost of Christendom, and in constant conflict with pagan neighbours. It was by her religion more than anything else that she was separated from them, and it gradually came about that the Russian distinguished between "Christian" and "heathen" in the same spirit that the Greeks distinguished between "Greek" and "barbarian," until the terms "Russian" and "Christian" became almost interchangeable and religion

a part of Russian patriotism. This feeling was greatly strengthened after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. For just as the Russian Empire is historically the successor of the Eastern Roman Empire, so the Russian Church is the successor of the Eastern Church whose headquarters were at Constantinople. It is this fact that gave point to the saying, "Moscow is the third Rome." For when Constantinople (the second Rome), fell before Islam, Russia became the natural protector of Eastern Christendom and the natural enemy of the Turks—a position that was strengthened by the circumstance that Ivan III. married Zoe Paleologa, niece of the last Eastern Emperor, who died fighting on the walls of his doomed city. The religious factor accounts for a great part of Russia's interest in the Balkans, for the heart of the Russian people went out to their Christian brethren struggling against the heathen Turk, and time after time they have fought on their behalf in the spirit of Crusaders.

Religious as he is, the peasant has no exaggerated respect for the priesthood, and is by no means priest-ridden. Maurice Baring relates how a soldier boasted to him of having dragged a drunken priest out of his bed to say Mass. "We said to him, 'Say Mass, you beast,' and he said Mass." The man was dissociated from the holy office. The peasants often require a freer expression for their religious emotions than is provided for by the State Church, with the result that there are an immense number of sects in Russia, some of which are of great interest. The Russian peasant is usually but little interested in theology, however; it is rather the human side of religion that makes its appeal to him. A story is told of an old moujik in whose presence reference was made to God the Father. "What, is the *old* fellow still alive?" he said, apparently not too well pleased. It is round the figures of Christ and the Virgin that Russian religion centres, and a typical expression of it is found in Tolstoi's tale, "Where love is, there God is," where the simple old cobbler who had heard a voice telling him that Christ would visit him, after expecting the Saviour in vain all day, realises at night that the Lord has indeed visited him in the shape of the persons in trouble whom he had helped and befriended.

There is, no doubt, a great deal that is superstitious and a great deal that is conventional about the peasant's religious life, but no unbiassed observer can doubt that the Russian is nearer the sources of genuine religious emotion than the modern West European, and that he has retained in its primitive healthfulness a faculty that in West Europe has weakened through atrophy. The Russian peasant still has the heart of a child; he has not yet been made blasé and sceptical by the artificiality of modern town life. He is still in touch with the realities of a life lived on the soil. As Tolstoi discovered after his conversion, it is hardly possible for the educated man or woman to adopt in its entirety the simple faith of the peasant and his belief in ceremonies, but he may at least receive from the peasant's religion an immense spiritual impulse, an un-failing supply of that raw material of religious feeling, in which

the cultured person is usually so deficient and which is yet the foundation of the noblest and strongest flights of the soul..

But although the Russian peasant has much to teach the over-industrialized populations of many West European countries, he has much also to learn. Those who have loved, known, and described him best have been fully aware of his weakness. It is dangerous to generalize about Russia, which, like other countries, contains all sorts of people, but most observers agree in attributing to the Russian peasant a certain slackness and indiscipline, a trait mirrored in the characteristic Russian expression, *Nichevo*—"it does'nt matter." There is also a tendency to take up a thing and not carry it through, which goes along with exaggerated waves now of optimism, now of despair. Irresponsibility is common and accounts for the lack of political sense. Finally, drink has long been a curse to the countryside.

Dostoevsky, the most Russian of all Russian writers, speaks thus of the Russian peasant:—

"I have been amazed all my life in our great people by their dignity, their true and seemly dignity. I have seen it in spite of the degraded sins and poverty-stricken appearance of our peasantry. They are not servile; and, even after two centuries of serfdom, they are free in manner and bearing,—yet without insolence, and not revengeful and not envious. You are a rich noble, you are clever and talented; well, be so, God bless you. I respect you, but I know that I too am a man. By the very fact that I respect you without envy I prove my dignity as a man. ."

The same author is never tired of emphasizing the mystical and spiritual side of the Russian genius. Russians are capable of making sacrifices for spiritual ends to a degree which the ordinary West-European finds it difficult to realize, but the secret of which he can penetrate by studying the books of the great Russian writers.

It is this strain in the Russian character which caused Russia to be the pioneer of the Peace Movement. It is easy to cast doubt on the sincerity of her Government, even to point to actions which were contrary to the spirit of her proposals at the very time these were first made. Nevertheless, it was no accident that the idea of the Hague Conference emanated from a Russian Tsar. Similar ideas had engaged the attention of both Alexander I. and Alexander II., and the popular feeling on the subject is expressed in the noble national anthem with its refrain, "Give peace in our time, O Lord." Even if the Russian people has had little peace, it desires peace, and in its very vices this is manifest. Aggression is not the vice characteristic of the Russians, but rather a too great slackness and indiscipline. Certainly, as the nation itself acquires a greater control of its policy, the dangers of aggression will decrease, though it is only right that other countries should realize that a mighty nation like Russia cannot remain indefinitely without free access to the world's seas.

It is the same spirit in Russia which has expressed itself in the recent prohibition of vodka, a step which has, on the whole,

been taken with the approval of the nation, and which deprives the revenue of some eighty or ninety millions per annum. Those who cannot imitate so drastic and courageous a measure, so resolute a girding up of the loins that a supreme purpose may be fulfilled, should not belittle it or grudge their admiration.

To-day a silent revolution, much more far reaching than any political revolution, is taking place in the Russian countryside, and the forces of change are threatening on every hand to sap the ancient foundations of peasant life. With what results, only the future can show, but it is safe to predict that, even if the old peasant spirit remains, many of the old forms will pass away. Let us glance briefly at some of the new forces which are at work. By a law promulgated in 1907, at the instance of Stolypin, it became possible for any peasant who wished to do so, to secede from the commune and to claim his share of the communal lands as his own private property.* Opinions differ as to the wisdom of this measure, but there can be no doubt that its effect will be revolutionary. The case against the communal system was that it prevented individual initiative. Thus it was extremely difficult to introduce new methods of cultivation in the commune, in face of the protests of the majority of the members, who resented the implied criticism of their own methods and age-long Russian tradition. On the other hand, it had long been the cement holding together peasant society and many of the moujiks have only abandoned it through intimidation and violence, and at the loss of it have become demoralized and taken to drink.

It is characteristic of Russia that when a commune is broken up, the members usually prefer to continue living in their villages all together than to go off and live in the solitude of their own allotments. It is in keeping with the same spirit that the Co-operative movement has recently made great progress among the peasantry.

The break-up of the commune is only one among many forces making for change in Russia. Another is the growth of trade and industry. Trade is being revolutionized by the improved means of communication. Dr. Williams writes: "The plain has been opened up. Instead of a number of small trading communities with imperfect means of communication, there is now one immense trading community, as broad as the Empire and possessing an interesting combination of ancient and modern traffic facilities, waterways and railways, caravans and motor-vans, barges and vessels with internal combustion engines." At the same time there is growing up a class of industrial workers, who are quite cut off from the soil. This class was first drawn from landless peasants and it will tend to be greatly increased as a result of the break-up of the commune. But it would inevitably develop even apart from such influences. For Russia is a land of untold wealth, waiting to be realized; according to the editor of the *Russian Year Book*, she is "without a doubt

* It has been found desirable, where possible, to divide up the communal land between *all* the holders, rather than to allow individual peasants to secede.

the richest empire the world has ever seen." The utilisation of her resources has begun and will continue steadily. The region around Warsaw has become one of the industrial centres of Europe. In the south of Russia there are numerous coal mines and iron foundries; Petrograd, Moscow and Riga are all important industrial centres. Baku has its oil fields, Siberia its gold fields, the forest regions their saw mills, the Urals its platinum and its gold fields. Among the industrial workers an independent spirit is growing up, and no measures of the Government succeed in stemming the growth of education among the factory hands. It was strikes among the workmen that formed the prelude to the revolution in 1905, and the influence of labour organisations on Russian life is quite out of proportion to their relatively small numbers.

Many observers of Russian life view the new process with a certain disquietude. Dr. Williams writes: "Excessive drinking is the rule in factory districts. The grosser forms of amusement make their way. The dark sides of industrial life are only too apparent, and under present political conditions it is difficult to mitigate them. Industrial life probably means progress to Russia, but at present it is a very rough-and-tumble and creaking kind of progress." The root of the evil is that, when the Russian peasant passes from agricultural to industrial life, the swiftness and suddenness of the change is liable to cut him off from tradition and old sanctions, so that he has no standard of life to which to conform. Nevertheless, there is reason to believe that Russia will come safely through the insidious dangers of an industrial revolution as she has come through so many other dangers. The path of safety lies in a reliance on her own profoundest instincts and traditions, in a retention of her ancient national spirit even if the outer forms through which it expresses itself may be changed.

Another powerful influence making for change in Russia is the spread of railways and the improvements in communication generally. The railways serve as a means of unifying the Empire under the control of the central authorities, but they also serve to spread ideas. Nor is this all. They have been of primary importance in that opening up of Asia which will always be associated with the reign of the present Tsar. The stream of Russians who settle in Siberia has been immensely increased as a result of the Trans-Siberian railway, and towns are growing up with the rapidity of American towns. Thus Novonikolaeivsk, in the Altai region, has developed in a few years from a mere village to a town of 80,000 inhabitants, of great importance as a dairy centre. Siberia itself has proved to be no desert but the Asiatic Canada, with splendid possibilities of grain-growing and immense stores of mineral wealth. It will be interesting to watch the influence exercised by Siberia on Russia proper during the next few decades. The country has had the same administrative and judicial system as Russia, since 1896, and has the advantage of being further away from the central authorities. It is developing an independent life of its own and a population that is, for better or worse, comparatively unfettered

by Russian tradition. It is go-ahead, even American in spirit, and wealth is amassed there quickly, as in the United States. Thus the revenue of the town of Omsk increased from 67,000 roubles in 1891 to 568,000 roubles in 1910, and this is merely typical of what has occurred in many Siberian towns. Between the years 1904 and 1910 many towns have doubled their budgets. In Western Siberia, the most developed part of the country, the number of factories has increased between the years 1900 and 1910 by about 75 per cent. and the production by 150 per cent.

The Trans-Siberian Railway, which is thus silently working a revolution in the world's economic life, has also been the cause of political upheavals. It made Russia's presence in the far East a much more real and formidable thing than it had been before, and thus led up to the war between Russia and Japan. Behind Russia's advance eastwards was not only the colonizing genius of the race, but also the unsatisfied desire to reach the world's great seas.

The present war seems likely to satisfy that desire and to lead to a relaxation of the seaward pressure in other directions by giving Russia a free outlet through the Dardanelles.

The influences we have tried to sketch are having their effect on the outlook of the whole Russian people, and are even inducing the peasant to take an interest in politics. The moujik who becomes a Trade Unionist no longer regards the Tsar as a deity, and he looks to the Duma as a means of expressing the popular will. But this is a new development, and in the early years of the reign of Nicholas II. the peasant's voice rarely penetrated to the council chambers of the State. Politics remained almost exclusively the pursuit of the educated classes, whose existence was so remote from that of the toiling masses below.

Nicholas II. succeeded to a perilous political heritage. The emancipation of the serfs in the sixties had been followed by a reaction which began by forcing the liberal movement underground and ended by making it revolutionary.

After the tragic assassination of Alexander II. in 1881, the Court fell more and more under the influence of the bureaucracy, which alone promised it safety from the Terrorists, and in the reign of Alexander III. there was a great development of secret police activity, provocation, and other methods of repression. The note of the coming conflict was sounded at the outset of the present Tsar's reign, when, acting under the influence of M. Pobiedonostsev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, Nicholas II. replied to a deputation representing the Zemstvos, or local government bodies, who were petitioning for an extension of the representative principle, that he intended to preserve the autocracy intact and that all hopes of representative institutions were "idle dreams." This attitude towards the Zemstvos was a great blow to the hopes of liberal Russians, who rightly see in that institution the seed from which a greater measure of self-government may spring. The Zemstvo was founded by Alexander II. at the time of the emancipation of the serfs, to deal with part of the immense work of reorganization that

measure involved. It is an elective local government body, composed of representatives of the gentry, the towns, and the peasantry, and it enjoys considerable powers. It can levy rates, keep up roads and bridges, and maintain schools and hospitals. Moreover it frequently undertakes educational work of a wider nature, such as sending agricultural experts touring round the district to instruct the peasants in the latest methods of cultivation, or medical experts to explain the principles of sanitation, while doctors and less highly qualified medical practitioners are permanently maintained at stations remote from hospitals. Since their foundation, the Zemstvos have been the homes of liberal ideas and have done an immense work in spreading light in dark places in Russia. They have also proved an admirable training ground for politicians. The Tsar's peremptory attitude towards them at a time when most Russians were weary of Alexander III.'s reactionary policy boded ill for Russia's peace.

The forces that grouped themselves for the coming struggle may be briefly glanced at. On the one side was the bureaucracy, whose natural instincts were against any radical change which might curtail their own power. The most powerful influence among them was M. Pobiedonostsev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod, who was an ardent upholder of Slavophil doctrines. These, when held by moderate men, imply the belief that Russia is essentially different from West Europe and ought not to go in West European leading-strings. She has her own distinctive national spirit, and this must find expression for itself in its own way. She must look to her own traditions for guidance and not to the abstract philosophies of modern French or German thinkers. In this sense Tolstoi himself was a Slavophil. But this attitude was easily perverted into a chauvinistic nationalism, which exalted everything Russian simply because it was Russian, and clamoured for the russianization of the many non-Russian peoples which form part of the Empire. Moreover, it came to regard as justifiable almost any means that might serve its ends.

Opposed to the bureaucracy were the intellectuals, whose passion was for the foundation of a higher and nobler social order in Russia. Their strength lay in their extraordinary devotion and self-sacrifice to their ideals. They believed in the Russia of their dreams as other men believe in their religion, and were ready to suffer torture and death, if they could thereby further its realization. But they suffered from many weaknesses. In common with other progressives, there was among them a great uncertainty as to what they really wanted, and they frequently quarrelled among themselves. Their repudiation of the ordinary sanctions of society resulted in the case of many of them in a drifting towards indiscipline and licence. They derived their ideas too exclusively from West Europe, were too prone to run after everything new, and had far too little knowledge of or respect for Russian tradition and history. Their scepticism in religious matters prevented them from winning the hearts of the peasantry and caused them to attack the wrong thing. But when we criticise them we must not overlook the

circumstances under which they developed. It is only too true that they were unpractical and doctrinaire, but it was by no means altogether their fault. It was too often the deliberate policy of the Government to prevent the formation of any society or association outside itself, and it killed by violence the great movement to the people in the seventies, when educated men and women in thousands gave up all their prospects of a personal career in order to live among the peasants in the humblest capacity and spread among them knowledge which they felt they only held in trust for the toiling masses. Nothing can dim the brightness of this movement, and had it come to fruition the subsequent history of Russia might have been less stormy. After its suppression, the "intelligentsia" seemed to become less practical and more doctrinaire, and to lose in fire and strength of purpose.

As the first period of reform came about after the shock of the Crimean War, so the second resulted from the defeat at the hands of Japan. But whereas the emancipation of the serfs took place peaceably, and was largely owing to the efforts of the Tsar himself, the granting of the Duma only followed upon a revolution. We have attempted to sketch the class from which the revolutionary impulse came; it remains to ask how that class won the popular support without which a revolution cannot be made. What more than anything else converted the peasant into a revolutionary was his hunger for land. A glance at the map would suggest that in Russia there must be more than enough land for all. But at the time of emancipation the authorities in many governments succeeded in whittling down the Emperor's original intentions, and providing the peasantry with less land than they required. Owing, moreover, to their old fashioned methods of cultivation, the peasants made less out of their holdings than might have been made. They looked with longing eyes at the estates of great landowners, and in the revolutionary period frequently banded together to attack them.

The main events of the Revolution are still fresh in people's memories—the murder of Plehve, the defeats in the Far East, the shooting down of a deputation of working-people on June 22nd, 1905, and, after peace had been concluded, the General Strike, which was only ended by the promulgation of a constitution on October 30th.

A new era had dawned for Russia, but it was an era of trouble. The revolutionaries had the power in their hands, but they did not play their cards wisely. Indeed they played into the hands of the bureaucracy they had defeated. The gulf between intellectual and peasant, which the latter's agrarian grievances had seemed for the moment to bridge, was discovered to be as wide as ever. When the revolutionary talked to the peasant about land nationalization, he found a ready audience, but when the peasant discovered that his preceptor proposed to abolish God and the Saints, he was filled with horror and loathing.

The revolution also showed itself extremely unpractical. The first Duma did, indeed, reveal the instincts of the Russian people for political freedom and their high ideals, but it showed no

aptitude for realizing them in practice. Quarrelling, windy talk, and the proposal of impossible schemes were the order of the day, and no attempt was made to establish the first principles of civil and political liberty, which was the only foundation upon which the dreams of the reformers could be built. By neglecting these humdrum but necessary matters the effectiveness of the Duma was reduced to a low point. After a session of 72 days it was dissolved by the Government. Many of the members went to Viborg, in Finland, and issued a manifesto calling upon the people, by way of protest, not to pay taxes or send recruits to the army. The manifesto fell flat, however, and proved especially disastrous to the most able of the existing parties, the Cadets (Constitutional Democrats). The Government took its opportunity and put most of the Cadet deputies out of the running for the future. The counter-revolution began to gather weight.

The policy of Stolypin, who had been appointed Premier in order to dissolve the Duma, was dictated by practical rather than theoretical motives. He believed the country was drifting into anarchy and conceived it to be his mission to pull it together. Like Strafford, his motto was "Thorough," and he did not care what means he employed if only his end was secured. Capital punishment, which had been abolished in Russia as far back as 1744, except for cases of high treason, was revived in order to make an end of the revolutionaries, and between 1905 and 1908 the number of executions reached the ghastly total of 3,629. The hangman's rope was commonly spoken of as "Stolypin's necktie." Along with the executions went a terrible development of secret police activity and of the subterranean workings of *agents provocateurs* to whose machinations Stolypin himself was destined to fall a victim. A second Duma was elected but proved as uncompromising as its predecessor and was in turn dissolved, and Stolypin, feeling strong enough to carry out a *coup d'état*, caused the electoral law to be altered by imperial decree, *i.e.*, over the head of the Duma. The new law transferred the preponderance in voting power from the peasantry to the landholders. The result was that the third Duma contained a large majority of conservatives and reactionaries. But, at least, it weathered the danger of being abolished root and branch, and dragged out five years of inglorious existence without being dissolved. The fourth Duma is of much the same complexion. It was largely ignored by the Government, but its existence was tolerated. Meanwhile, the Duma has served as a valuable training ground to the nation in matters political, and though it has disappointed the extravagant expectations entertained of it, it yet stands as a symbol of things accomplished and a pledge of greater things to come.

What are the problems that lie before Russia at the present day? There is, first of all, the constitutional problem which has still to be settled. The bureaucracy continues to rule Russia not because it rules well, but because the revolution failed to rule at all. The events following the revolution have caused progressives in Russia to think of many things which they had previously failed to take into account. There is developing a

healthy tendency to blame not the bureaucracy, but themselves, for their failure. An increased respect for Russian history and tradition is becoming manifest among them, an interest in Russian religion even is beginning to make itself felt, and it is realised that one cannot hope to reform a country until one understands the life and mentality of the people of that country. In other words, the counter-revolution brought the doctrines of the progressives to the sharp test of reality and began to separate what was tenable in them from what was mere theory. The tendency now growing up is to attempt to devise a check on the bureaucracy rather than to overturn the existing order. This object is as wise as the other was foolish, and there is every reason to think that, after the years of humiliation, Russian Liberalism will emerge as strong as before and far wiser, far more in touch with the real needs of the nation, and able to assist the Tsars to control the bureaucratic machine which weighs them down by reason of the huge size to which it has grown.

The problem of administration has also to be faced. It is the hope of most thinking Russians that for local Government purposes the Zemstvos will be further utilized and that there will be no more docking of their powers such as took place in the reign of Alexander III. The whole system of administering the huge Empire is, moreover, in need of overhauling. The administrative machine created by Peter the Great has grown too vast and clumsy for present needs. It requires greater elasticity, greater allowing for local differences. To a large extent, the levelling process implied in Russia's advance eastwards has been necessary and beneficial, and too little is known of the great work she is doing in Asia. But when applied to the non-Russian nationalities on the western borders of her Empire, this process is extremely harmful. It was, indeed, repudiated in principle by Catharine II., who (writing when Finland still belonged to Sweden) laid down the following principles:

"Little Russia, Lithuania and Finland are provinces which must be ruled according to their privileges; to destroy these by doing away with all of them suddenly would be highly imprudent, and to call them foreign countries and treat them accordingly for the same reason would be worse than a mistake; it would be stupid. It is our duty to attach these provinces to us by the easiest means, so that they should grow to be Russian and cease to be like wolves with one eye on the wood. It is extremely easy to do this if sensible and selected people are sent as governors to these provinces."

The history of Finland during the last 100 years is the best illustration of the wisdom of Catherine's attitude.

If the extension of local government by increasing the powers of the Zemstvo seems to be the solution of many internal problems, the problem of the non-Russian nationalities in the Empire would be best met by a move in the federal direction. Modern Russia is altogether too big and complex to be administered indefinitely by a highly centralized and cast-iron system. The proclamation to Poland would seem to indicate that Russian statesmen have some federal scheme in view. If Alexander II. had not been

assassinated, it is probable that such a scheme would have been adopted long ago, as many highly placed Russians who were in his confidence advocated federal principles as the only satisfactory solution of the problems of administration and were, in this respect, in advance of the revolutionaries, most of whom had had no experience of such matters. But the assassination of Alexander put back the clock for nearly a generation.

Many other signs of change might be referred to. But enough has been said to show that there is no truth in the taunts of those who say that Russia is still and will always be "the old Russia"—meaning by that the melodramatic caricature that passed for Russia until recent years. Russia, too, is on the pathway of change. Tremendous forces are at work, remoulding the nation, forces incalculably more powerful than mere political revolutions. What kind of a Russia will emerge it is impossible to say—Russia is always a land of surprises. But those who love the country, while they hate the abuses of bureaucratic stupidity, of secret police repression, of extreme Slavophilism, and a hundred other things, are by no means anxious to see Russia transformed into a poor reproduction of a West European nation. They feel that she has something vitally her own to contribute to the world, something that the world cannot afford to lose. As Mr. Dover Wilson has written: "The problem of modern Russia is not to imitate the West, but to discover some way of coming to terms with western ideals without surrendering her own."

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Russia under Nicholas II

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